

2025 WL 863469

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United States District Court, N.D. Texas, Dallas Division.

Joseph BOND, on behalf of himself and
all others similarly situated, Plaintiff,

v.

**FOLSOM INSURANCE AGENCY
LLC** and Cody Folsom, Defendants.

No. 3:24-cv-2551-L-BN

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Signed March 19, 2025

Attorneys and Law Firms

[Anthony I. Paronich](#), Paronich Law PC, Hingham, MA,
Andrew Roman Perrong, Perrong Law LLC, Glenside, PA,
[Sharon K. Campbell](#), Law Office of Sharon K. Campbell,
Dallas, TX, for Plaintiff.

[Jason Ray Jobe](#), Yesha Prakashcha Patel, Thompson Coe
Cousins & Irons LLP, Dallas, TX, [Haley S. Grissom](#), Dentons
U.S. LLP, Dallas, TX, for Defendants.

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

[DAVID L. HORAN](#), UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE
JUDGE

*1 Defendants Folsom Insurance Agency, LLC and Cody
Folsom (collectively, “Folsom”) have filed a Motion to
Bifurcate Discovery. *See* Dkt. No. 30.

Plaintiff Joseph Bond filed a response. *See* Dkt. No. 31.

This case has been referred to the undersigned United States
magistrate judge for pretrial management under [28 U.S.C. §
636\(b\)](#) and an order of reference from United States District
Judge Sam A. Lindsay. *See* Dkt. No. 32.

For the reasons explained below, the Court denies Folsom's
Motion to Bifurcate Discovery [Dkt. No. 30].

Background

This case concerns a class action lawsuit alleging violations of
the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”), [47 U.S.C.
§ 227](#).

Plaintiff Joseph Bond alleges that Defendants placed at least
one prerecorded telemarketing call to his cellular phone
without his prior express written consent in violation of the
TCPA. *See* Dkt. No. 6.

Bond alleges the following putative class:

Robocall Class: All persons within the United States:
(1) to whose cellular telephone number or other number
for which they are charged for the call (2) Defendants
(or an agent acting on behalf of Defendants) placed
a telemarketing call (3) within the four years prior to
the filing of the Complaint (4) using an identical or
substantially similar pre-recorded message used to place
telephone calls to Plaintiff (5) from four years prior to the
filing of the Complaint through trial.

Id. at 9 (emphasis in original).

Folsom denies TCPA liability and contends that Bond cannot
maintain his lawsuit as a class action because it fails to meet
the requirements of [Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23](#).

The Parties have begun discovery and filed a joint status
report to assist the Court in entering a scheduling order under
[Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 16\(b\)](#). *See* Dkt. No. 29.

In the joint status report and this subsequent motion, Folsom
asks the Court to bifurcate and limit discovery into two phases
– individual and class-based discovery – and allow for class-
based discovery only if Bond's individual claims survive
dispositive motions. *See* Dkt. No.29 at 4-5; Dkt. 30 at 1.

Legal Standards & Analysis

“Under [[Federal Rule of Civil Procedure](#)] 42(b), district
courts have discretion to bifurcate trials ‘[f]or convenience, to
avoid prejudice, or to expedite and economize.’ ” [Pharmerica
Corp. v. Advanced HCA LLC](#), No. 2:17-cv-00180-JRG, 2018
WL 3326822, at *1 (E.D. Tex. May 1, 2018) (quoting Fed. R.
Civ. P. 42(b)). “The decision to bifurcate ‘is a matter within
the sole discretion of the trial court.’ ” *Id.* (quoting [First Tex.
Sav. Ass'n v. Reliance Ins. Co.](#), 950 F.2d 1171, 1174 n.2 (5th
Cir. 1992)).

2025 WL 863469

And Federal Rule of Civil Procedure “26 affords trial courts ample authority to control the sequence and timing of discovery.” *E.E.O.C. v. Lawler Foods, Inc.*, 128 F. Supp. 3d 972 (S.D. Tex. 2015).

The issue before the Court is whether it should bifurcate and limit discovery into two phases – individual and class-based discovery,

Folsom contends that discovery should be bifurcated because rulings on Bond's individual claims will determine the validity of his class-based claims. *See* Dkt. No. 1 at 1. And it asserts that “bifurcation will be expedient and economical because it will help determine whether [Bond] is a proper class representative before broader discovery is taken.” *Id.*

***2** Bond contends that Folsom's bifurcation proposal is an “end-run” around the Court's Order granting in part Bond's motion to compel, which involved classwide discovery. *See* Dkt. No. 31 at 2-3; Dkt. No. 28.

In the order that Bond references, the Court stated:

As to Interrogatory Nos. 6 and 7, “[t]he Court will not engage in a preemptive merits analysis to determine whether [Bond] is entitled to discovery on the claim that [he] has pleaded and is pursuing.” *Firebirds Intl, LLC v. Firebird Rest. Grp., LLC*, No. 3:17-cv-2719-B, 2018 WL 3655574, at *16 (N.D. Tex. July 16, 2018). “The Court will not prematurely assess the balance of the evidence on the merits of [Bond's] claim[s] against [Folsom Insurance] and will not credit [Folsom Insurance's] assessment to cut off [Bond] from seeking relevant evidence from this named party before discovery has closed and any summary judgment motion has been filed.” *Velazquez v. El Pollo Regio LP, LLC*, No. 3:15-cv-3170-M, 2017 WL 2289185, at *6 (N.D. Tex. May 25, 2017). On the Court's reading, Bond has pleaded “call” broadly enough to include ringless voicemails, and, although the Court need not now determine whether a ringless voicemail can support liability as a matter of law under the statute, Folsom Insurance's answer is incomplete as to what Bond is asking based on what he has pleaded and is pursuing. And Folsom Insurance has not supported its other boilerplate objections and may not avoid appropriate classwide discovery that is – as Bond persuasively argues – necessary for a future class certification motion.

Dkt. No. 28.

Bond also asserts that there is “significant overlap” between discovery relevant to the merits of his individual claims and issues of class certification Dkt. No. 31 at 6. And, so, Bond argues that bifurcation would lead to duplication of discovery and may result in further discovery disputes regarding the distinction between merits and class discovery. *See id.* at 6-7. In Bond's view, bifurcation of discovery in this case would lead to the “opposite of judicial economy.” *Id.* at 6.

As to class certification under [Rule 23](#), the Supreme Court has instructed that “certification is proper only if ‘the trial court is satisfied, after a rigorous analysis, that the prerequisites of [Rule 23\(a\)](#) have been satisfied.’ ” *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*, 564 U.S. 338, 350-351 (2011) (quoting *Gen. Tel. Co. of Sw. v. Falcon*, 457 U.S. 147, 161 (1982)).

And “[f]requently that ‘rigorous analysis’ will entail some overlap with the merits of the plaintiff's underlying claim” because “the class determination generally involves considerations that are enmeshed in the factual and legal issues comprising the plaintiff's cause of action.” *Id.* at 351 (cleaned up).

Considering *Dukes* and the “rigorous analysis” requirement for class certification, district courts have been reluctant to bifurcate class-related discovery from discovery on the merits. *See Ahmed v. HSBC Bank USA, Nat'l Ass'n*, No. EDCV152057FMOSPX, 2018 WL 501413 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 5, 2018) (declining to bifurcate discovery in TCPA case and stating that “the distinction between class certification and merits discovery is murky at best and impossible to determine at worst”); *Chen-Oster v. Goldman, Sachs & Co.*, 285 F.R.D. 294, 300 (S.D.N.Y. 2012) (collecting cases).

***3** In another TCPA case, *Cardenas v. Resort Sales by Spinnaker, Inc.*, No. 9:20-cv-00376-RMG, 2021 WL 733393 (D.S.C. Feb. 24, 2021), the Court found that bifurcation would not serve the interests of judicial economy given the plaintiff's “persuasive argument that the evidence needed to determine whether [they] have a claim substantially overlaps with [their] ability to represent a class under [[Rule](#)] 23.” *Cardenas*, 2021 WL 733393, at *3.

Similarly, here, the undersigned already found that Folsom “may not avoid appropriate classwide discovery that is – as Bond persuasively argues – necessary for a future class certification motion.” Dkt. No. 28. And, so, the Court agrees with Bond that bifurcation would not promote efficiency because there is considerable overlap between discovery

relevant to the merits of his individual claims and issues of class certification. Accord *True Health Chiropractic Inc. v. McKesson Corp.*, 2015 WL 273188, *2-3 (N.D. Cal. 2015) (declining to bifurcate a TCPA class action and noting that individual and class discovery claims typically overlap).

And, in light of the bulk of authority discussing the lack of a “bright line” distinction between merits and class discovery, bifurcation could lead to avoidable, future disputes over whether a particular discovery request relates to the merits or to class certification. See *Quinn v. Specialized Loan Servs., LLC*, 321 F.R.D. 324, 327–28 (N.D. Ill. 2017); see also *City of Pontiac General Employees’ Retirement System v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.*, 2015 WL 11120408, *1–2 (W.D. Ark. 2015) (bifurcation may force the court to resolve “endless discovery disputes”); *True Health*, 2015 WL 273188, at *3 (finding that bifurcation “raise[s] a slew of issues as to what discovery relates to the class, as opposed to the named plaintiffs, thereby causing additional litigation regarding the distinction between the two.”).

And, so, considering the binding law from *Dukes* and persuasive authority from other district courts, the Court declines to bifurcate discovery in this case.

Conclusion

For the reasons explained above, the Court denies Folsom's Motion to Bifurcate Discovery [Dkt. No. 30]. The Court will separately enter a scheduling order under [Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 16\(b\)](#) in accordance with this Memorandum Opinion and Order.

SO ORDERED.

All Citations

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